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Westerly autumn movement of *Eristalis* spec. near Heidelberg, south-west Germany

(Diptera: Syrphidae)

by

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At 1515 hrs. on 14.X.1989, while cycling along the Grenzhöfer Strasse immediately to the south of the small village of Grenzhof, 6 km wnw of Heidelberg Hauptbahnhof (Baden-Württemberg), I encountered a strong westwards movement of a species of *Eristalis* (Diptera: Syrphidae), probably *tenax* L., flying very fast, without deviation, on a narrow front of about 10 metres. Unfortunately, I was without a net and efforts to catch specimens by hand were unsuccessful as they were flying too fast. Even though several collided with me in their unswerving course they continued their journey unharmed and undeterred. Owing to an appointment I was unable to return that afternoon with a net. However, I paused long enough to estimate that these Syrphids were passing at a rate of c. 70 per minute, thus giving an hourly rate of c. 4200.

This flight occurred during a period of sunshine between 1030 hrs. and 1530 hrs., following a long oeriod of rain. More heavy rain followed the sunshine from 1700 hrs. The wind was a light westerly and the temperature at the time was about 14°C. The *Eristalis* were therefore flying directly into the wind at a height of between one and two metres. A back projection of their direction of flight indicated that they were coming from the valley of the River Neckar where it passes between the steep wooded mountains of the Odenwald.

I have seen similar strong movements of *Eristalis* spp., including *tenax*, near and along the coast of south-west France in October 1953 (BURTON & OWEN, 1954, 1955) and 1966, except that the direction of flight was to the south or south-west.

In Switzerland in September 1880, thousand of *Eristalis silvaticus* MEIG. and *Syrphus lavandulae* MACQ., were observed flying south-west up to the Majola Pass and a similar movement, involving *E. tenax* and *Episyrphus balteatus* DEGEER was seen near the Brünig Pass in September 1924 (WILLIAMS, 1958). Moreover, over several weeks in September and October 1953, C. B. WILLIAMS (1958) and other entomologists watched extensive movements to the south-west, through the Pyrenean passes between France and Spain, of *E. tenax*, *Scaeva pyrastri* L. and *E. balteatus*.

It seems probable that strong flights of migrating Syrphidae moving in directions between west and south are a feature of every autumn in western Europe.

References

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